WISCONSIN DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH
Department of Health and Family Services

Haemophilus Influenzae Type B
(HIB disease)

Disease Fact Sheet Series

What is *Haemophilus influenzae* type B (Hib)?
Hib are bacteria that may cause a variety of diseases including blood infection and meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain).

How common is Hib disease?
Since the introduction of the Hib vaccine in 1988, Hib cases have declined by 95% in infants and young children. Before the use of an effective vaccine, Hib was the most common cause of bacterial meningitis in children.

Who gets Hib infection?
Anyone can get Hib infection, but it is most common in children between the ages of three months and three years. The elderly and persons with weakened immune systems are also at a higher risk of developing the disease.

How is Hib infection spread?
Hib infection is spread by inhalation of droplets that contain the bacteria from the nose and throat. Although not common, some individuals may carry Hib in their nose and throat without becoming ill and potentially spread the bacteria to others.

What are the symptoms of Hib infection?
Fever is present in all forms of Hib infection. Other symptoms of Hib infection depend on the part of the body affected. Hib can result in sinus infections, earaches, and skin infections. Hib may also cause serious illnesses like meningitis, (characterized by the usually sudden onset of fever, lethargy, vomiting, and a stiff and/or rigid neck and back), pneumonia, epiglottitis (inflammation of upper airway), and blood stream infections.

How soon do the symptoms appear?
The period between exposure to Hib and the beginning of symptoms is unknown, but is probably short (2-4 days).

Does past infection with Hib make a person immune?
Children who develop Hib infection before 24 months of age may not develop immunity and should still be immunized with the Hib vaccine. If Hib infection occurs in an unimmunized child after 24 months of age, the child generally develops future immunity and vaccination is not necessary.

What is the treatment for Hib infection?
Hib infections are treated with antibiotics. Patients are no longer infectious 24-48 hours after receiving effective antimicrobial therapy.

What can be done to prevent the spread of Hib infection?
All children should be immunized with Hib conjugate vaccine beginning at approximately two months of age. Close contacts of a person infected with Hib may require immediate preventative antibiotics depending on circumstances.

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